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**Influence of perceived city brand image on emotional attachment to the city**

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**Influence of perceived city brand image on emotional attachment to the city**

**Abstract**

**Purpose-**This study examines the influence of perceived city brand image on emotional attachment to the city. The study also compares the effects of perceived brand image of the city on the emotional attachment to the city across two groups: residents and visitors.

**Design/methodology-** A total of 207 usable questionnaires were collected from 107 residents of the city of Bratislava, Slovakia, and 100 visitors to the city. Partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) method was used for data analysis.

**Findings-**This study establishes that perceived city brand image significantly influences emotional attachment to the city. The study concludes that affective city image has a greater impact on emotional attachment to the city among residents, and less impact for visitors. In contrast, the influence of cognitive city image on emotional attachment to the city does not vary across the two categories of residents and visitors to the city.

**Practical implications-**City tourism marketers should focus on improving city brand images to enhance tourists' emotional attachment to the city to promote repeat visits among visitors.

**Originality/value-** This study contributes to improving understanding of the impact of perceived city brand image on emotional attachment to the city across the two groups, residents and visitors, using social exchange theory. Furthermore, the findings come from a relatively under-researched Central and Eastern European (CEE) region.

**Keywords:** Perceived city brand image, Moderating effect, Residential status, Residents, Visitors image, Emotional attachment

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Research interest in the marketing of cities as tourist destinations has gained momentum in the past decade, as cities increasingly compete for tourists (e.g., Braun *et al.*, 2013; Gu and Ryan, 2008; Hankinson, 2004; Phillips and Jang, 2010; Tsai, 2012; Vanolo, 2008; Zenker and Beckmann, 2013). Furthermore, in recent years, city branding has become an emerging academic theme and an important practice by local authorities and governments (Sahin and Baloglu, 2014; Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2006; Lucarelli and Olof-Berg, 2011). Additionally, empirical studies in the field of marketing (e.g., Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011; Park *et al.*, 2010) show that emotional attachment leads to improved customer loyalty, positive word-of-mouth publicity and other desirable post-purchase behaviors. Thus, it has become essential for marketers of cities as tourist destinations to understand the various antecedents of emotional attachment to cities. The present study investigates the influence of perceived city brand image on emotional attachment to the city and compares these effects across two groups: city residents and visitors. Previous studies have concluded that favorable perceived images of destinations influence destination choices (e.g., Braun *et al.*, 2013; Gartner, 1989; Hankinson, 2004; Phillips and Jang, 2010; Ramkissoon and Nunkoo, 2011; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989; Zenker and Beckmann, 2013). Furthermore, several tourism scholars (e.g., Qian and Zhu, 2014; Tsai, 2012; Tsai, 2015) have demonstrated that place attachment induces strong positive attitudinal loyalty and revisit behavior to places. Although these past studies have explored the relationship between perceived image and emotional place attachment, limited studies have focused on the impact of perceived brand image and emotional attachment to the city across groups of tourists of different residential status. Additionally, previous studies have indicated that the perception of cities varies based on tourists' residential status in the city. More specifically, different

categories of tourists, such as residents of the city and visitors – i.e., people who have visited the city at least once – hold different perceptions of the city (Braun *et al.*, 2013; Phillips and Jang, 2010; Zenker and Beckmann, 2013). Therefore, the current study aims to (1) determine the influence of perceived city image on emotional attachment to the city, and (2) examine the moderating role of residential status on the relationship between perceived city image and emotional attachment to the city.

The contribution of this study is twofold. First, it attempts to bridge the gap in the city brand image literature by establishing a link between perceived city image and emotional attachment to the city, based on familiarity with the city. The study also contributes to improving understanding of the impact of perceived city brand image on emotional attachment to the city across the two groups using social exchange theory. The findings will enable marketers to develop relevant marketing strategies pertaining to tourist products for the two segments of city tourists. Furthermore, the study was carried out in Bratislava, the capital city of Slovakia, an emerging tourist destination city in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region. Previous studies of city brand image have focused predominantly on well-known tourist destinations, such as New York, USA (Phillips and Jang, 2010), Hamburg, Germany (Zenker and Beckmann, 2013), and Turin, Italy (Vanolo, 2008). Lesser-known places like Bratislava have so far been neglected in tourism studies. Therefore, the findings of this study are also expected to provide contextual understanding of how perceived city brand image affects emotional attachment to cities, based on studies of the relatively under-researched CEE region.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows. First, the literature is reviewed, focusing on the conceptual framework, the hypothesized relationships, and theories supporting each of the hypotheses. Next, the research methodology is outlined. The research results are then

presented, followed by a discussion of the study's findings and recommendations for future studies.

### Theoretical framework and the hypothesized relationships

Figure 1 presents the study's conceptual framework. The dependent variable of the conceptual model is emotional attachment to the city. The independent variable is perceived city brand image, which is represented by its two components: affective city brand image and cognitive city brand image (Phillips and Jang, 2010). Additionally, the variable of residential status in the city moderates the impact of cognitive city brand image and affective city brand image on the individual's emotional attachment to the city.

**Figure 1 about here**

#### *Emotional attachment to the city*

Emotional attachment to the city refers to the bond between a person and a city, characterized by deep feelings of connection, affection, and passion (Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011). Bowlby (1979) is credited with originating the concept of emotional attachment in his pioneering work on the interaction between parents and infants. More recently, researchers have extended the idea of emotional attachment to consumer behavior (e.g., Fedorikhin *et al.*, 2008; Fournier, 1998; Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011; Koo and Hardin, 2008; Malär *et al.*, 2011; Park *et al.*, 2010; Patwardhan and Balasubramanian, 2013; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Vlachos, 2012; Vlachos *et al.*, 2010; Yuksel *et al.*, 2010). Past studies have demonstrated that consumers who are emotionally attached to brands tend to be more loyal to the attached brands compared to those who are less emotionally attached (Batra *et al.*, 2012; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Fournier,

1998; Thomson *et al.*, 2005; Vlachos *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, consumers who are emotionally attached to brands are willing to pay premium prices (Thomson *et al.*, 2005) and tend to overlook these brands' mistakes (Batra *et al.*, 2012).

In the tourism field, existing studies on attachment have tended to focus on the broader concept of place attachment (e.g., Kaltenborn and Williams, 2002; Kyle *et al.*, 2004; Lewicka, 2005; Tsai, 2012; Yuksel *et al.*, 2010). Place attachment is defined as "the emotional and psychological bonds formed between an individual and a particular place" (Tsai, 2012, p. 139). The literature (i.e., Florek, 2011; Zenker and Rutter, 2014) indicates that, usually, people who live in a place for a long period develop a sense of attachment to the place. Although the concepts of place attachment and emotional attachment may appear to be similar, there are subtle differences between the two concepts, as emotional attachment (also referred to as *affective attachment* in place-attachment literature) is a subcomponent of place attachment (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). Although antecedents of place attachment have been widely reported in published studies (e.g., Hou *et al.*, 2005; Hwang *et al.*, 2005; Gross and Brown, 2008; Warzecha and Lime, 2001), little is known about the antecedents of emotional (affective) attachment to places such as cities. This study attempts to contribute towards the understanding of the antecedents of emotional attachment to cities.

*Perceived city brand image and emotional attachment*

The independent variable, perceived city brand image, is conceptualized as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that connect numerous people to a city (Brandt and Mortanges, 2011; Kotler and Andreasen, 1991; Zenker and Beckman, 2013). Thus, the overall perception of city image is based on both cognitive and affective (emotional) impressions (Anholt, 2006).

Cognitive evaluations refer to the individual's impressions based on knowledge and beliefs pertaining to a city, whereas affective appraisals concern the individual's feelings towards the city (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Walmsely and Jenkins, 1993).

Published studies (e.g., Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1994; Gunn, 1972) demonstrate the importance of image formation agents (IFA) for the enhancement of both cognitive and affective destination image. There are three types of IFA: organic, induced, and autonomous (Gartner, 1994). Organic IFA consist of noncommercial information sources, such as Word of Mouth (WoM), actual visitations, and direct experience. Induced IFA are destination efforts of the destination promoters. Autonomous IFA refers to the independent agents, such as online and offline news articles, films and pop culture. Many tourism studies (e.g. Hou, Lin, and Morais, 2005; Lee et al., 2015; Prayag and Ryan, 2012) provide empirical evidence of the positive impact of IFA on destination image. Therefore, widespread use of IFAs for the marketing of tourist destinations tends to improve the destination image.

We further draw on the well-established positive relationship between destination image and place familiarity (Chen and Lin, 2012; Horng, Liu, Chou, and Tsai, 2012; Milman and Pizan, 1995; Sun, Chi, and Xu, 2013; Tan and Chang, 2016) to develop the hypothesized impact of (i) affective city brand image on emotional attachment to the city for the city residents and visitors, and (ii) cognitive city brand image on affective attachment to the city for the city residents and visitors. Place familiarity is defined as an individual's "ability to describe or even map a place based on images, memories, and perceptions of locations, size, distance, physical attributes, and site experiences" (Hammitt *et al.*, 2006, p. 25). Past studies (e.g., Gartner, 1989; Goodrich, 1978; Hankinson, 2004; Woodside and Lyonski, 1989) show that positive destination image tends to attract further tourist visits. Moreover, frequent visits to a place as well as prolonged



period of residence enhance familiarity with the place (e.g., Ujang, 2008). Thus, we argue that place familiarity facilitates the development of both cognitive image (i.e., ability to describe places) and affective images (i.e., positive or negative feelings and perceptions of the places). While residents develop familiarity with the city mainly through prolonged direct experiences, visitors improve place familiarity mainly through secondary information sources, such as tourism information (Prentice and Andersen, 2003) and the limited direct experiences with the destination (Tan and Chang, 2016). Therefore, place familiarity improves both affective and cognitive image of the city for the residents and visitors alike. Additionally, Ujang (2008) asserts that place familiarity enhances place attachment through fostering a sense of strong connection and belonging to the place. Emotional attachment involves strong connection and belonging to a city brand (Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011). Furthermore, past studies (e.g., Lee et al., 2015) assert that both cognitive and affective image have positive influence on place attachment. Considering that emotional attachment is a subcomponent of place attachment (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001), we hypothesize that:

**H1:** Affective city brand image positively influences emotional attachment to the city for the city residents and visitors.

**H2:** Cognitive city brand image positively influences emotional attachment to the city for the city residents and visitors.

*Moderating effects of residential status: Theoretical bases*

Social exchange theory (SET) explains how individuals make decisions to initiate, accept, maintain, or terminate relationships, based on benefit-cost ratios (Ramkissoon and Nunkoo, 2011). Therefore, in the tourism context, SET predicts that residents will welcome the development of tourist attractions in their cities if they perceive positive benefit-cost ratios for

such developments (Andereck *et al.*, 2005, 2007; Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004; Ramkissoon and Nunkoo, 2011). More recent studies (e.g., Moyle *et al.*, 2012) show that city residents and visitors perceive different benefit-cost ratios for tourist development in a city. From the residents' perspective, the positive contribution of tourism to the community may include increased employment opportunities, improved infrastructure (Park *et al.*, 2015), and increased tax revenue to local authorities (Wang and Pfister, 2008; Yu *et al.*, 2011). On the one hand, residents may perceive some negative social consequences of increased tourism in local communities, such as increased incidents of theft and burglary, vandalism, problems related to alcohol, drug abuse, and environmental damage (Andereck and Nyaupane, 2011). Furthermore, residents, unlike visitors, have citizen rights and obligations, such as electing local government officials and paying taxes (Braun *et al.*, 2013). Braun *et al.*, (2013, p. 20) argue that residents, through their close connections and interactions with the city environments, are "an integral part of the place (city) brand". In that respect, it can be argued that residents are more inclined than visitors to perceive their city more positively and get more emotionally attached to their city, as they associate with the city more closely. For visitors, the perceived benefits, lower than for the residents, are most likely to be in the form of improved facilities and security in the city. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that the general perception of improved facilities in the city may attract diverse groups of tourists, thereby raising the visitors' sense of insecurity due to increased perceived incidents of negative events (i.e., theft, alcohol and drug abuse, etc.).

Furthermore, some researchers (e.g., Gu and Ryan, 2008; Ryan and Aicken, 2010), drawing from social identity theory, conclude that when residents and visitors share the same values and interact frequently, the city image gap between residents and visitors tends to diminish. Social identity theory explains the human tendency to associate with people whom

they closely identify with (Hogg and Terry, 2000). Previous studies also show that both residents and visitors can develop feelings of place attachment (Gu and Ryan, 2008; Gross and Brown, 2008). On the other hand, where visitors come from different parts of the world, and are therefore not necessarily of the same social identity as the city residents, the residents are more likely to perceive more benefit-cost ratio than visitors, due to differential perception of benefits of, and obligations to, the city's development programs (Ryan and Aicken, 2010). In the context of the present study, we anticipate that visitors to European cities are likely to be from diverse cultures, and therefore not necessarily of the same social identity as the city residents. This is because CEE, being one of the fastest growing European tourism markets in terms of international tourist arrivals and receipts since the late 1990s (WTO, 1999), has attracted a high volume of international visitors such as Japanese. However, Japanese tourists are unlikely to have frequent interactions with the residents, due to the language barrier as well as culture and identity distance (Balaz and Mitsutake, 1998). Therefore, a perceived city image gap is likely to exist and the influence of city brand image on their emotional attachment to the city may vary from those of the residents. Thus, following our hypothesized positive impact of both cognitive and affective city brand image on emotional attachment to the city in H1 and H2, we further hypothesize that:

**H3:** The influence of affective city brand image on emotional attachment to the city is stronger for residents than for visitors.

**H4:** The influence of cognitive city brand image on emotional attachment to the city is stronger for residents than for visitors.

## Methodology

### *Context of the study*

The empirical research for this study is based on the context of Bratislava, the capital city of Slovakia, which is a relatively small CEE country. Slovakia is one of the “new” members of the European Union and has good potential for tourism. Located on the banks of the Danube River, Bratislava offers a variety of stylish restaurants, traditional pubs, bars, galleries, museums, and the Slovak National Theatre, where the Slovak Philharmonic, ballet, and opera typically perform. The Bratislava Castle, situated on a hilltop within short walking distance of the old town, is a visible tourist attraction within the city. Bratislava holds numerous cultural events and festivals throughout the year, notably Bratislava Jazz Days and the Bratislava International Film Festival. Furthermore, Bratislava is in strategic partnership with Vienna, which has become an important tourist attraction, as it facilitates tourist travel up and down the Danube River via the Twin City liner, a luxury boat. Matlovičová et al. (2009) assert that Bratislava has become an attractive place for one-day or weekend shopping or party tourism, due to its low prices of services in comparison to other places in Western Europe. However, in terms of tourism, it is far behind in comparison with other competitive cities in the region of CEE (i.e., Prague, and Budapest), as the promotion of the city to potential visitors is poor since financial resources are limited (Matlovičová *et al.*, 2009).

### *Sample*

Data was collected from two distinct groups of respondents: residents of Bratislava (residents), and people who had visited Bratislava as tourists at least once (visitors). Three postgraduate

students trained in data collection were contracted as research assistants. These research assistants collected the data via paper–pencil questionnaires, emails, and online questionnaires.

The respondents were contacted at university campuses and at their homes in the UK and Slovakia, with the help of the research assistants’ contact networks of students. The online questionnaire was distributed via email and social media (mainly Facebook and LinkedIn). Respondents who were contacted via social network sites and email were first asked to answer a screening question, which determined whether they were residents of Bratislava or had visited Bratislava as tourists at least once. Respondents who did not fall into either category were asked not to continue the questionnaire. The total number of respondents could not be established due to the nature of the open online survey, which made determining the response rate impractical. However, a total of 207 usable questionnaires were collected across the two groups of respondents, as shown in Table 1.

*Measures*

The items used to measure cognitive city brand image were selected from Ramkissoon and Nunkoo’s (2011) city image attributes. Care was taken to include in the scale only those items considered relevant to tourists’ cognitive perception of city image. Additionally, only items with loadings of more than .5 were included for further analysis. The measurement process involved asking respondents to indicate their level of belief, on a seven-point scale, that the city of Bratislava had certain attributes, such as attractiveness or parks; being an exciting or clean city; having friendly people; etc. Next, the measurement scale for affective city image was developed based on Russell *et al.*’s (1981) scale. Respondents were asked to indicate on a seven-point, bi-polar scale the degree of their personal feelings towards the city of Bratislava. This scale

consisted of the following dimensions regarding the city of Bratislava: arousing–sleepy; pleasant–unpleasant; exciting–gloomy; and relaxing–distressing. Then, emotional attachment was measured based on scales used in past studies (i.e., Malär *et al.*, 2011; Yuksel *et al.*, 2010). Respondents were asked to indicate, on a seven-point scale, the extent of their feelings toward the city of Bratislava on the emotional attachment dimensions, which consisted of affection, love, connection, passion, delight, captivation, and sense of belonging.

#### *Analysis of the measurement and structural model*

A structural equation model (SEM) was employed to analyze the hypothesized structural model (Figure 1). SEM was the preferred method because, unlike other causal analysis models, such as regression analysis, SEM integrates the various elements of the hypothesized model in a holistic manner (Chin, 2010). To this end, the two widely accepted methods of analyzing SEM in business management and social sciences research are the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) (Joreskog, 1970, 1978) and partial least squares (PLS) methods (Lohmoller, 1989; Wold, 1975). PLS, a variance-based structural equation modeling technique (Hair *et al.*, 2014; Henseler *et al.*, 2009), was used to analyze the hypothesized model in the present study. The choice of PLS over the covariance-based MLE for the present study was based on two main considerations (Hair *et al.*, 2014; Picon *et al.*, 2014; Roldan and Sanchez-Franco, 2012). First, the present study focuses on a prediction pertaining to the dependent variable, rather than testing the overall fit of the model based on previously validated studies. The PLS method is suitable for analyses that focus on estimating the contribution of the various independent variables to the dependent variable, as is the case in the present study. Second, the study involved a relatively small sample size of 207, which suits the PLS method better than covariance-based methods (Hair *et al.*,

2014). SmartPLS3, which is software for analyzing variance-based structural models (Hair *et al.*, 2014), was employed to analyze the PLS model structures for the present study. Data analyses were carried out in two stages, in accordance with the recommendations of Chin (2010) and Henseler and Chin (2010). The measurement model was evaluated in the first stage of the analysis, followed by an analysis of the structural model in the second stage.

**Results**

*Profile of the study and descriptive analysis*

Table 1 summarizes the sample characteristics. The number of respondents across the two groups was fairly similar, and the sample had nearly equal numbers of males and females (males = 50.5%, females = 49.5%).

**Table 1 about here**

The participants in this study were relatively young, with 78% under 35 years of age. This is mainly because the participants were recruited through social networks. However, it was not expected that the prevalence of young adults in the study sample would have a major influence on the study results. The analysis of means among the age groups by way of ANOVA showed no significant difference between the means of any of the age groups.

*Assessment of the measurement model*

The measurement model was assessed for reliability and validity criteria (Hensler *et al.*, 2009). Reliability was assessed based on the minimum threshold values of the outer loadings ( $\lambda$ ) and composite reliability (CR). The validity was evaluated based on the average variance extracted (AVE) (Ringle *et al.*, 2010). As shown in Table 2, almost all the loadings (except for clean city),



and all measures of CR were above the minimum recommended level of .7, indicating acceptable levels of construct reliability. Although the loading for clean city (.679) was slightly below .7, the item (clean city) was retained in the scale to preserve the face validity of the construct of cognitive city brand image. In terms of reliability, the AVE values were well above the recommended minimum threshold value of .5, confirming construct reliability. Furthermore, the square root of the AVE for each of the constructs was larger than the coefficient of the correlation between that construct and any other construct in the model, suggesting adequate discriminant validity (Fornell and Larker, 1981). Additionally, loadings of items are highest on the corresponding construct in comparison with any other construct in the model, further confirming discriminant validity (Rezael, 2014).

**Table 2 about here**

#### *Evaluating the structural model*

After confirming the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the next step was to assess the structural model, which included examining the hypothesized relationships of the study. The PLS algorithm was applied, through bootstrapping of 5000 samples, to estimate the model path coefficients, significance of path coefficients, the explained variance ( $R^2$ ) for the dependent variable, as well as the multi-group analysis (Hesler *et al.*, 2009). Figure 2 presents the structural models of: (a) the whole sample, (b) samples for the residents of Bratislava, and (c) samples for the visitors to Bratislava. The model was assessed for explained variance ( $R^2$ ) and predicative relevance based on the same three samples. The explained variance ( $R^2$ ) values for the three samples (whole sample, .529; residents, .626; and visitors, .741) indicate high levels for



the contribution of cognitive city image and affective city image to emotional attachment to the city. The  $Q^2$  values (whole sample, .303; residents, .4; and visitors, .521) demonstrate high predicative relevance of the model across the three analyzed samples ( $Q^2 > 0$ ).

**Figure 2 about here**

Table 3 presents the results for the analyses of H1 and H2, which were carried out based on the whole sample involving residents of and visitors to Bratislava. Although both path coefficients for affective city brand image and cognitive city brand image are significant, showing support for both H1 and H2, affective city brand image had a higher impact on emotional attachment to the city compared to cognitive city brand image.

**Table 3 about here**

The tests for H3 and H4, which analyzed the structural differences between the models evaluated on the basis of separate sample data from the residents and visitors, are shown in Table 4. The results show that the impact of cognitive city brand image on emotional attachment to the city is significantly stronger for visitors than for residents. Therefore, compared to residents, the visitors' beliefs about the attractiveness and quality of Bratislava's physical and social environments had a stronger impact on emotional attachment to Bratislava. On the other hand, the positive feelings towards Bratislava had a stronger influence on emotional attachment towards Bratislava for the residents than for the visitors.

**Table 4 about here**

Overall, the results show that cognitive and affective city images significantly influenced individuals' emotional attachment to the city. Furthermore, residential status had a significant

moderating effect on the impact of the affective city brand image on emotional attachment to the city. More precisely, the influence of affective city brand image on emotional attachment was stronger for the residents than for the visitors. However, the influence of affective city brand image on emotional attachment to the city was stronger for residents than for visitors.

## Discussions and conclusions

This study examined the effects of perceived city brand image on emotional attachment to the city from both city residents' and visitors' perspectives. It compared the views of residents, who are more familiar with the place they live, with the perceptions held by the city's visitors, who mainly consider the place as a destination. The results confirm that perceived city brand image influences emotional attachment to the city. More precisely, in line with the findings from Lee *et al.* (2015), this study concludes that both affective city image and cognitive city image positively influence emotional attachment to the city. At the same time, the findings reveal that the influence of affective city image on emotional attachment to the city is substantially more pronounced among city residents than visitors. By contrast, cognitive city image has the same level of impact on emotional attachment to the city for both residents and visitors.

The results have several theoretical and managerial implications. From a theory-development perspective, the results reaffirm the multidimensionality of perceived city brand image, as reported in past studies (e.g., Gu and Ryan, 2008; Kavartzis, 2012; Merrilees *et al.*, 2012; Yuksel *et al.*, 2010). Also, it expands the literature of city branding, as it is focused on an emerging tourist destination city in the CEE region, where there have been limited studies.

One practical implication of these findings is that the city authorities should create a sellable city brand by using proper logo, slogan and visuals in its marketing communication

program. Implementing such a marketing communications program would potentially increase the level of place attachment for all visitors (Stylos *et al.*, 2017). Matlovičová *et al.* (2009) state that the previous effort to create a sense of city brand through the logo ‘Bratislava – little big city’ like the national one ‘Slovakia –little big country’ was criticized as vague and associated with smallness rather than with a positive reference to the creation of a cozy place. Today, the city’s marketing program includes a new visual and slogan “The city where you find real life” ([www.visitbratislava.com](http://www.visitbratislava.com)). This effort might be more sellable, recognizable and thus successful to the main categories of the city’s tourist categories, such as weekend shopper-tourists or party tourists. Florek (2011) points out that an appropriate marketing program for a city should meet specific goals and the characteristics of tourist–segments. As Ashworth and Kavaratzis, (2009) point out “It is in people’s minds that the city takes form through the processing of perceptions and images about the city” (p. 521); therefore, any branding effort of a city must be congruent with the perceived city image by city users (Kemp *et al.*, 2012). Residents could disagree with a simplified city brand (Zenker *et al.*, 2017) or a city brand effort can be mocked by both residents and visitors. A characteristic example is that of Seoul’s ‘I. Seoul. U’ new brand effort (Joo and Seo, 2017), and Perm’s city brand campaign ‘European culture, lifestyle and leisure in the first Russian capital of culture’ (Shafranskaya and Potapov, 2014), which had small and negative acceptance respectively by the residents of and the visitors to these cities.

On the other hand, whilst researchers are beginning to recognize the period of residence as the integral part of the place brand (Braun *et al.*, 2013), studies that focus on the interrelationship between forming city image and destination image from both residents and visitors’ points of view are still limited. We argue that an integrated approach is needed to highlight the vital role that the period of residence plays in aligning the possible gaps between

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2  
3 affective and cognitive city image. In other words, through better understanding of the effects of  
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5 perceived city brand image on emotional attachment, residents' views could be utilized and  
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7 should be prioritized in a city's place and destination branding strategy. By doing so, residents  
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9 could feel more connected with their city's brand as in the case of San Francisco, where its  
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11 residents, due to their strong feelings towards the city brand, call the city 'Frisco' (Kemp *et al.*,  
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13 2013).  
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18 Another practical implication of the results is that marketing activities aimed at the city  
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20 residents should focus on affective messages. For instance, advertising that is aimed at a city's  
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22 residents might involve patriotic imagery, such as the use of local heroes and popular celebrities,  
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24 popular national or local lyrics, and local scenery that arouses patriotic feelings and emotional  
25  
26 attachment. Such emotional attachment to the city might influence city residents to support city  
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28 tourism through activities such as positive word-of-mouth publicity and a welcoming attitude  
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30 towards visiting tourists. For example, in 2007 New York City authorities, in an effort to  
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32 encourage New York residents to welcome visitors and share with them their knowledge on  
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34 various activities (i.e., late night eats, liveliest flea markets), launched a campaign named 'Just  
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36 Ask the Locals' by featuring celebrity residents such as Robert de Niro, Julian Moore, Kevin  
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38 Bacon and Sean Diddy Combs (Insch, 2011).  
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44 Residents as brand community co-creators (Braun *et al.*, 2013) can participate in the  
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46 city's promotional campaign (Florek, 2011) and thus, residents act as ambassadors for the city  
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48 (Braun *et al.*, 2013; Zenker *et al.*, 2017). This is of great importance, since residents are not only  
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50 the most important target audience of city branding, but also the most significant marketers of a  
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52 city (Kavaratzis, 2004).  
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**Limitations and recommendations for future research**

This study is the first attempt to compare the effect of perceived city image on residents’ emotional attachment to the city with that of visitors. While the responses gathered through questionnaires yielded meaningful results, the study has some notable limitations. First, and most notably, this study was conducted based on a single city located in the CEE region. Therefore, the results may not be widely generalizable to other cities. Future research could employ a multiple case study strategy to compare residents’ and visitors’ views on the influence of perceived city image on emotional attachment to the city in three or more geographical regions. Second, the sample size and sampling frame of the present study included 107 residents living in Bratislava and 100 UK-based visitors who had visited the city at least once. Future studies could have larger sample sizes and recruit visitor participants based in multiple locations. Third, the use of social media networks to recruit suitable participants meant that 78% of the respondents were under the age of 35. Future research that includes a wider range of populations would be beneficial for comprehensively examining the factors that affect one’s emotional attachment to a city, as would research in different cultural contexts. Lastly, this quantitative study tested predetermined hypotheses.

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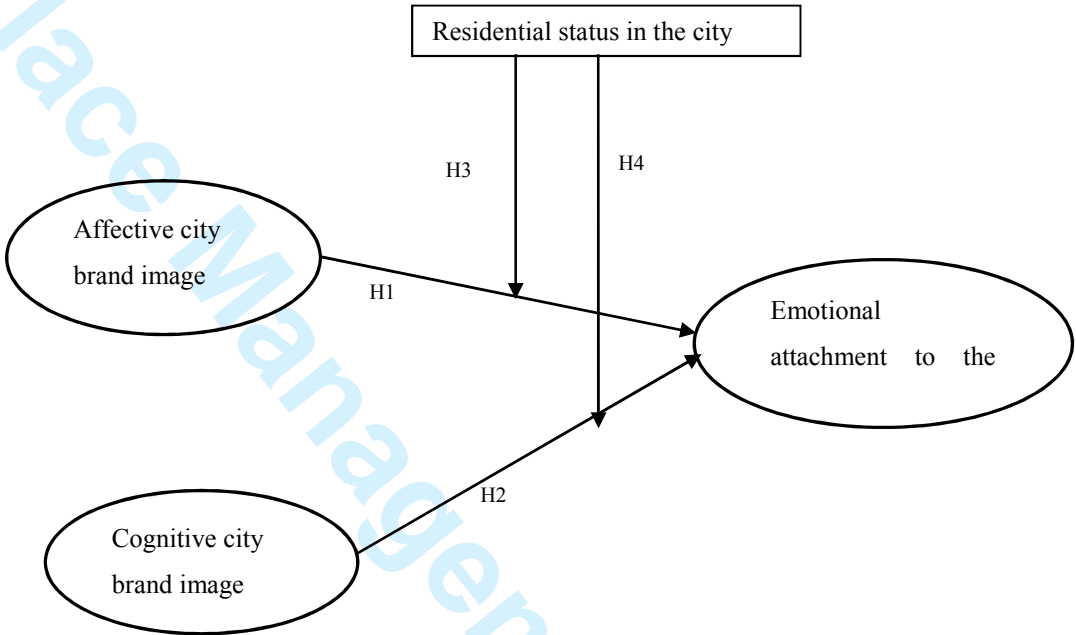
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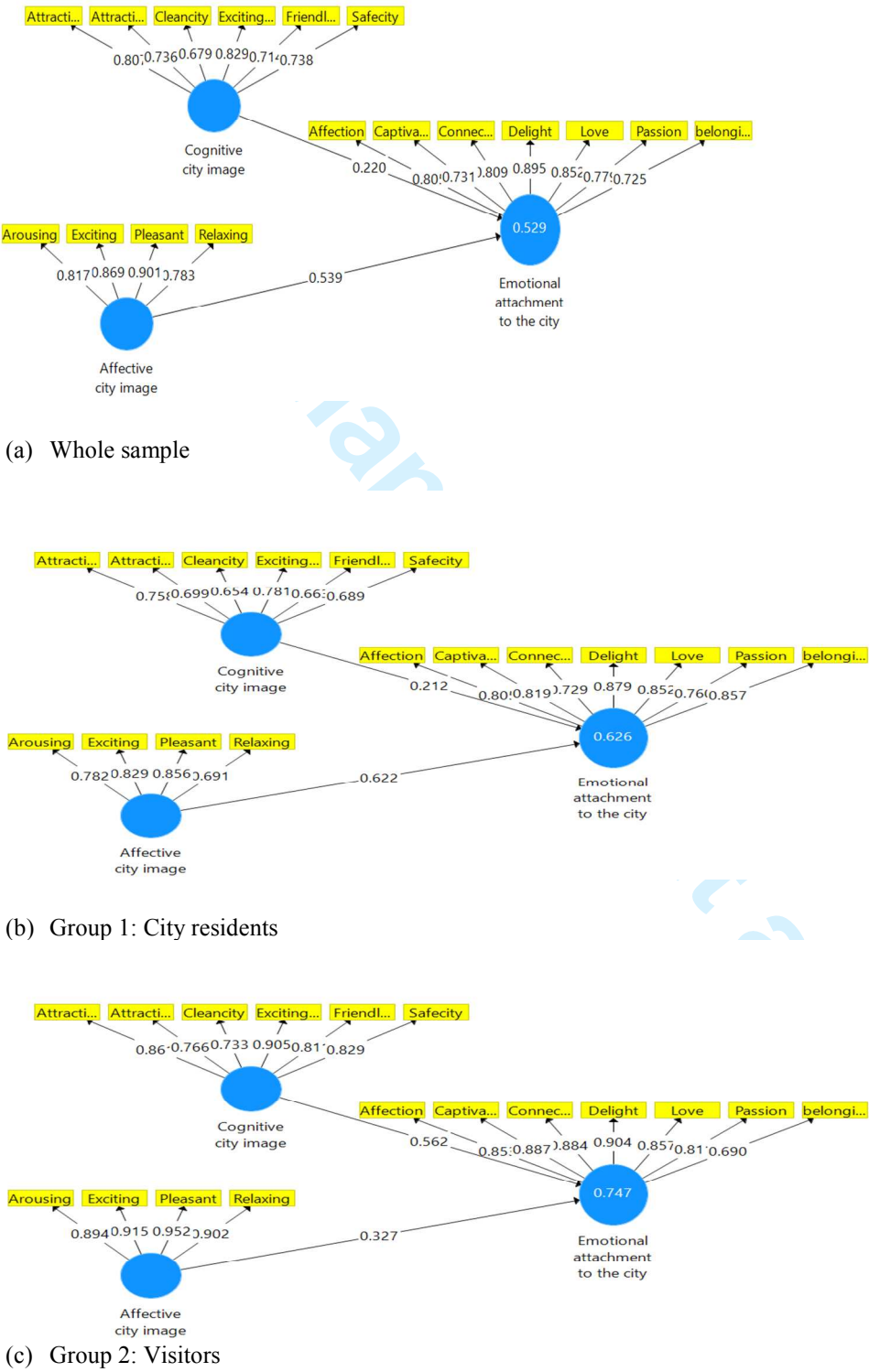
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**Figure 1:** Conceptual framework linking affective city brand image and cognitive city brand image to emotional attachment to the city



**Figure 2:** Moderating effects of residential status: The influence of affective image of the city brand on emotional attachment to the city



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**Table 1:** Demographic profile of respondents for each residential status

Residential status with respect to Bratislava				
		Residents	Visitors	Total
Gender	Male	54	57	111
	Female	53	43	96
Total		107	100	207
Age	18–24	50	26	76
	25–34	41	45	86
	35–50	9	23	32
	Over 50	7	6	13
Total		107	100	207

**Table 2:** Outer loadings ( $\lambda$ ), outer T-statistic ( $\lambda$  T-statistic), Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), AVE, and CR of the constructs.

Constructs/Item	( $\lambda$ )	$\lambda$ T-statistic	A	CR <sup>b</sup>	AVE <sup>a</sup>
<b>Cognitive city brand image</b>			0.847	0.886	0.566
Attractive buildings	0.807	25.758			
Attractive parks	0.736	18.351			
Exciting city	0.869	30.854			
Friendly people in the city	0.714	14.729			
Clean city	0.679	14.643			
<b>Affective city brand image</b>			0.865	0.908	0.712
Exciting	0.869	53.612			
Relaxing	0.783	18.644			
Pleasant	0.901	54.210			
Arousing	0.817	25.146			
<b>Emotional attachment</b>			0.909	0.926	0.642
Affection	0.805	22.489			
Love	0.852	34.603			
Connection	0.809	14.545			
Passion	0.779	20.379			
Delight	0.895	62.331			
Captivation	0.731	25.912			
Sense of belonging	0.725	18.600			

<sup>a</sup> AVE = (summation of the square of the factor loadings)/{(summation of the square of the factor loadings)+(summation of the error variances)}.

<sup>b</sup> CR = (square of the summation of the factor loadings)/{(square of the summation of the factor loadings)+(square of the summation of the error variances)}.

<sup>c</sup> t-values for two-tailed test-value 1.96 (significance level = 5%).

Table 3: Hypothesised structural relationships

Hypothesized Relationships	Whole Sample n = 207			
	B	T-statistic	Sig.	Decision
H1: Affective city brand image positively influences emotional attachment to the city.	0.539	6.607	0.000	Supported
H2: Cognitive city brand image positively influences emotional attachment to the city.	0.220	2.621	0.009	Supported

**Table 4:** Hypothesized structural differences between models for residents and visitors

	Residents (R) n = 107			Visitors (V) n = 100			Path Coefficients Difference: Residents/Visitors		
	$\beta_R$	T-statistic	Sign	$\beta_V$	T-statistic	Sign	T-statistic	Sign	Decision
H4: Affective city brand image positively influences emotional attachment to the city.	0.622	6.851	0.000	0.327	2.682	0.007	0.296	0.022 significance	Supported
H3: Cognitive city brand image positively influences emotional attachment to the city ( $\beta_R > \beta_V$ ).	0.212	2.215	0.024	0.562	4.880	0.000	0.351	0.993 significance	Not supported, since, $\beta_R < \beta_V$